

The National Youth Sports Strategy



Kansas City Virtual Workshop
July 27, 2021
Summary Report



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NATIONAL YOUTH SPORTS STRATEGY

Kansas City Workshop Summary

Overview

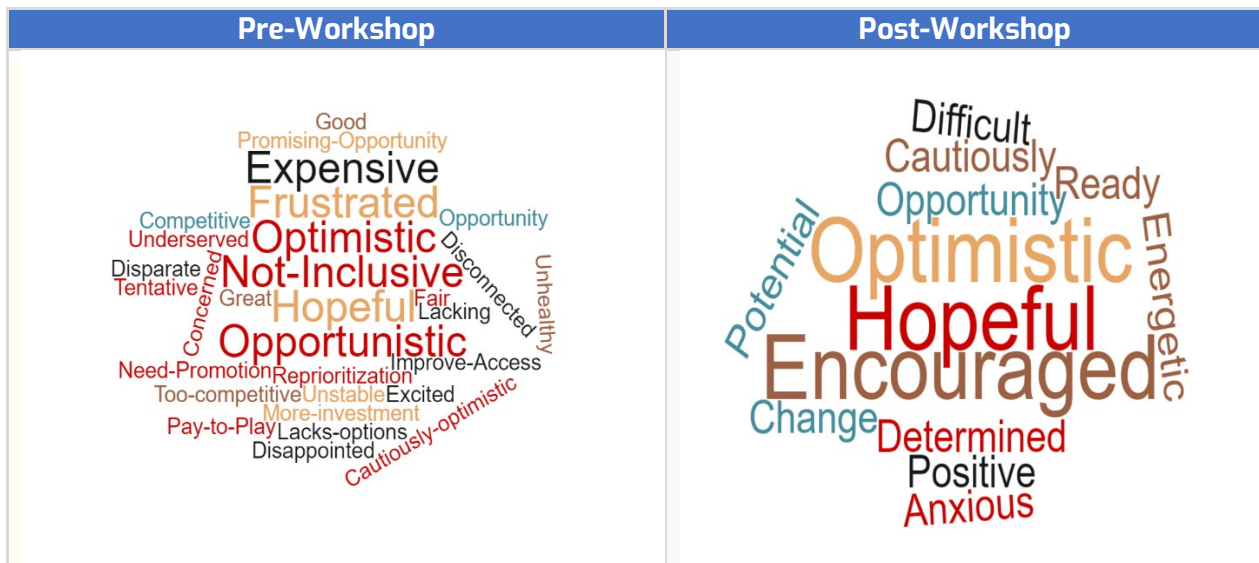
The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Disease of Prevention and Health Promotion (ODPHP), in collaboration with the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (OASH) Region 7, hosted the National Youth Sports Strategy (NYSS) Kansas City virtual workshop to bring together youth sports stakeholders to discuss how to ensure youth have safe, fun, inclusive, developmentally appropriate, and accessible sports opportunities throughout the Kansas City metro area.

Participants represented organizations ranging from local lawmakers, state and municipal governments, state and nonprofit sports organizations, and academics.

Workshop activities included networking opportunities, small group discussions to brainstorm ways to achieve select action items from the NYSS in Kansas City, a presentation on the Aspen Institute's Project Play initiative, and resource sharing from both the federal government and stakeholders across the youth sports landscape.

Participants were asked to share their feelings about the state of youth sports prior to and at the end of the workshop (Figure 1). The first word cloud reflects how attendees were feeling before the workshop, while the second reflects how they were feeling about the future of youth sports at the end of the workshop.

Figure 1. Participant Word Clouds



Key Findings from Breakout Discussions

Breakout 1

The first breakout discussion centered on how to implement specific NYSS action items throughout the Kansas City metro area. Attendees worked together to talk through barriers to success, overcoming barriers, and who can implement the action items on both a local and more general level.

The information discussed, and main points presented by the small groups during the first breakout session are categorized as individual tables below relating to the specific NYSS action items that were covered and voted on by the respective small groups.

There were common challenges and opportunities that emerged independently within each of the small groups, regardless of which action item was being discussed. Those common themes were:

Common barriers across all groups:

- Costs as fees associated with participation
- Access to facilities and equipment
- Standards and recruitment for coaches and volunteers
- The emphasis on winning and the hyper-competitive mentality of youth sports

Common ways to overcome barriers across all groups:

- Find additional funding sources from companies, nonprofits, and other organizations that serve the community
- Improve collaboration and communication across all stakeholders
- Centralize and formalize educational and certification programs for coaches and volunteers
- Include and expand "just for fun," pick-up, and informal options for kids where there isn't the pressure to perform and win at an elite level


Common implementors across all groups:

- Technology and healthcare/insurance companies, foundations, and nonprofits
- Policymakers and leaders from local schools, athletic departments, and local Departments of Parks and Recreation, as well as policymakers from the local to the federal level
- A localized governing body and/or better collaboration between leagues, organizations, and stakeholders
- Advocates and community stakeholders including local schools and youth sports organizations, local departments of Parks and Recreation, Boys and Girls clubs, and other community stakeholders

Each group was provided with four potential action items for discussion based on votes collected during registration. Participants then prioritized the action items during the small group discussions. Full lists of action items can be found at the Mural Links. The action items prioritized by each group are summarized in the tables below:

<p>Group One <u>(Mural Link)</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Action Item: Encourage sport sampling (playing more than one sport throughout the year). ○ Action Item: Structure practices and games to provide all participants with more time engaged in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity to meet the Physical Activity Guidelines.
<p>Group Two <u>(Mural Link)</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Action Item: Make having fun a primary focus of sports programs. ○ Action Item: Promote physical literacy (the ability, confidence, and desire to be physically active for life) as a foundation for sports programs.
<p>Group Three <u>(Mural Link)</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Action Item: Promote the benefits of youth sports and opportunities to participate. ○ Action Item: Support policies that facilitate access to youth sports and facilities (e.g., shared use agreements, Complete Streets, master development plans, Safe Routes to School).
<p>Group Four <u>(Mural Link)</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Action Item: Embrace a sports-for-all mentality and offer programs that are safe, fun, inclusive, developmentally appropriate, and accessible to all youth. ○ Action Item: Require and provide training or certification programs for coaches, officials, and volunteers.

The following tables focus on the specific barriers to success, ways to overcome barriers, and who can implement solutions for each of the action items covered by the respective small groups.

 Encourage Sport Sampling (playing more than one sport throughout the year)
Barriers to Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of opportunities (limited options at school, limited options for beginners, noncompetitive opportunities). • High fees, financial issues. • Scheduling conflicts, expectation to play year-round, all in commitment, no time for other sports. • Lack of practice facilities/ facilities to play in. • Families cannot provide transportation year-round. • Kids are hesitant to try new things, lack of exposure to different sports.
Overcoming Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of different opportunities (central organizing piece, database to search for options, awareness through social media). • Make collaboration between organizations mandatory, ask local funders to fund initiatives. • Collaboration with churches, schools, Hy-Vee, create a facilities bank, ask schools to open up facilities. • Have local sports teams act as spokespeople. • Systemic change to address related social determinants of health.
Who Can Implement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents • Kansas City Sports Commission/Kansas City Physical Activities Plan • Local sports teams • Funders • Schools/after school programs



Structure Practices and Games to Provide all Participants with More Time Engaged in Moderate-to-Vigorous Physical Activity to Meet the Physical Activity Guidelines

Barriers to Success

- Coaches need more training.
- Don't provide enough opportunities for physical activity, reluctant to change.
- Lack of facilities/access to facilities for activity.
- Team size, overloading teams.
- Not rotating kids during games.
- Not structuring time to include skill building.

Overcoming Barriers

- Provide ongoing opportunities to coaches to continue learning and share learning with peers.
- Create awareness of opportunities to use facilities, partnerships between teams to share facilities.
- Optimizing partnerships between groups, appreciation and benefits on both sides.
- Recruit more coaches to break up teams into smaller groups.
- Teach students sports psychology in PE class.
- Subsidize transportation for coaches.

Who Can Implement

- *Time called before the group discussed this issue.*



Make Having Fun a Primary Focus of Sports Programs

Barriers to Success

- Parents
- Elitism
- Access/affordability
- Staffing/coaches
- Lack of time
- Pressure on kids to perform at an elite level

Overcoming Barriers

- Educate parents, make them allies, distance/remove the parents (parent workout sessions).
- Refocus on recreation and intramurals, access.
- Remove the pressure on kids.
- Access to resources (equipment, coaching, leagues, facilities).
- Funding, training, and recruitment programs. Partner with health providers (state and local).
- Educate kids, create a safe pressure-free place.

Who Can Implement

- Higher education resources, schools and teachers, online education.
- Parks and Recreation Departments.
- Sports leagues and local organizers.
- Local professional teams partnering in the community.
- Partner with businesses for time off.
- Partner with health providers and certification boards (state and local).
- Non-profit funding, government funding.



Promote Physical Literacy as a Foundation for Sports Programs (The Ability, Confidence, and Desire to be Physically Active for Life)

Barriers to Success

- Lack of education, barriers to physical literacy and education.
- Access: lack of balance and availability of outlets to add to the curriculum.
- Too much screen-time for kids and adults alike.
- Role models: Parents, family and culture does not always exhibit positive, active lifestyles.
- School system (No Child Left Behind).

Overcoming Barriers

- Educating parents to set the tone/rules ahead of time.
- Age-appropriate guidance, data-driven guidance/evidence to support parents.
- Partnering with schools – public and private – to build their own facilities.
- Utilize screens to reach kids where they are. Structured or limited screen time.
- Tailored support based on community needs.
- Provide access yourself: offer evidence-based strategies that support the inclusion of PE in the curriculum.
- State and federal funding.

Who Can Implement

- Local sports leagues on the professional, amateur, and recreational level.
- Partnerships with technology companies in the community/region.
- Non-profits: partner with after-school programs to offer sports/fitness programming.
- Engage political officials, city managers, local mayors.
- Parents, responsible tech-companies (CSR strategies).
- Teachers, coaches, parent volunteers.
- Partnering with school districts and school boards to advocate for integrating PE back into the curriculum.



Promote the Benefits of Youth Sports and Opportunities to Participate

Barriers to Success

- Narrow definition/perception of sport: People don't see youth sports and physical activity as the same thing.
- Lack of shared language around physical activity and healthy lifestyles.
- Lack of role models and overprogrammed and overscheduled kids.
- Misalignment around priorities in organizations, e.g., pay-to-play, club rules, greed.
- Cost of participation, lack of access to transportation and equipment.
- Lack of access to shoes and clothes and equipment for kids with physical disabilities.
- No consideration that sports conflict with other interests and responsibilities for high school girls and other marginalized groups.
- Lack of platform to promote benefits and opportunities.

Overcoming Barriers

- Stakeholders should use a consistent definition (e.g., PE teachers, pediatricians, role models, parents, etc.) when discussing youth sports and physical activity more generally.
- Educate parents on non-competitive options. Normalize and promote non-competitive options.
- Promote trying different sports/adventures: i.e., sports sampling and exposure to non-traditional sports.
- Funding for kids to buy shoes and clothes. Money for special equipment for kids with disabilities.
- Role models besides elite athletes.
- Qualify PE teachers, increase time spent doing moderate to vigorous physical activity in PE.

Who Can Implement

- Schools and Parks and Recreation departments can be leveraged to promote the benefits across many of these populations and communities.
- ShareWave: community-based organizations with teens and kid audience.
- Community leaders and stakeholders: PE teachers, healthcare providers, policy makers (school districts, mayor), professional athletes and teams.
- Professional athletes and teams, college athletes and students, high school athletes.
- Boys and Girls Clubs, youth ambassadors, city government, and Governor's council on fitness.



Support Policies that Facilitate Access to Youth Sports and Facilities
 (e.g., Shared Use Agreements, Complete Streets, Master Development Plans, Safe Routes to School)

Barriers to Success

- Jurisdictional challenges: too many governments, too many organizations.
- Each school district has its own policies about shared facilities, including private schools.
- Kids don't live near their schools and don't have reliable transportation.

Overcoming Barriers

- Creating neighborhoods within the city, breaking down the metro into manageable chunks.
- Promote bike- and walking-friendly streets, free transit to kids.

Who Can Implement

- *Time called before the group discussed this issue.*



Embrace a Sports-for-All Mentality and Offer Programs that are Safe, Fun, Inclusive, Developmentally Appropriate, and Accessible to All Youth

Barriers to Success

- Funding, grants, money, volunteers.
- Transportation: getting kids where they need to be.
- Safe spaces to play and participate.
- Mentality: egos from parents/coaches "win at all cost."
- Understand what sports are for – learning, growing, and fun.
- "Pay for play" attitude and structure of many programs.
- Time – other opportunities/options and responsibilities.
- Kids want to have fun – creativity is being taken away, let the kids play.
- Viewing youth as "developed" athletes who are going to grow and become better/best/champion.
- Recruiting kids in middle school.
- People willing to make money off opportunities for kids.
- Combining fun with the opportunity to grow.
- Girls dropping out due to family obligations/responsibilities.
- Lack of social supports.
- Negative impact on sports by COVID.
- School board policy changes.
- Missing out on opportunities to nurture kids' talents/interests.

Overcoming Barriers

- Create and foster fun.
- Change the entire mentality/educate parents.
- Focus on the richness of life skills that come from sports.
- Address fear of missing out.
- Start making changes in urban core first: there needs to be more safe, accessible places.
- Uber for kids: safe rides to and from sports.
- Expanding into non-traditional sports. Support sports sampling.
- Support pick-up games/scrimmages for fun and low or no barrier to entry programs: low/no cost, no scoring options.
- Ask for funds to be allocated to physical education instead of youth sports.
- Incentives for kids with opportunity to earn points – funded by sponsors.

Who Can Implement

- Government: create a Ministry of Youth Sports.
- Institutional money: Health Forward/Kaufman Foundation.
- National and international sports organizations.
- Business owners like gyms and fitness trainers: bring training/fitness to kids.
- Schools/after school programs and local recreation centers.
- Peer leaders: people who can drive change.
- Families, parents, and older siblings/role models.
- Student advisory panels/mentorship programs.



Require and Provide Training or Certification Programs for Coaches, Officials, and Volunteers

Barriers to Success

- Lack of a centralized system.
- Consensus on what certification is needed. Currently regulations are "wild, wild west."
- Where to get training or certification? What is the value?

Overcoming Barriers

- Create certification and a regulatory committee.
- Create a youth sports alliance that understands the youth and community landscape and put a plan in place for change.
- Create education and training and clear meaning about certifications.
- Create an incentive-based program and partner with insurance providers.

Who Can Implement

- Safe stars program. National youth sports alliance.
- BlueCross BlueShield/other insurance providers.
- High school association/athletic associations.
- Athletic directors.
- Hospital sports medicine groups.

Breakout 2

For the second breakout discussion, groups continued to think about how to improve youth sports while diving deeper into specific topic areas, using a PICK chart to consider the difficulty and impact of different ideas (Figure 2).

The topics discussed during the second breakout session were:

- [Policies to promote the importance of sports \(Mural Board\)](#).
- [Disparities in access \(Mural Board\)](#).
- [Developmentally appropriate and health-focused programming \(Mural Board\)](#).

Common themes that emerged from the second breakout session were:

- Increase partnership and collaboration among groups and organizations.
- Use of technology and social media to reach audiences (kids, parents, teachers).
- Expand affordable/free offerings to reach more kids.

The information discussed and presented by the small groups during the second breakout session is captured in the tables below.

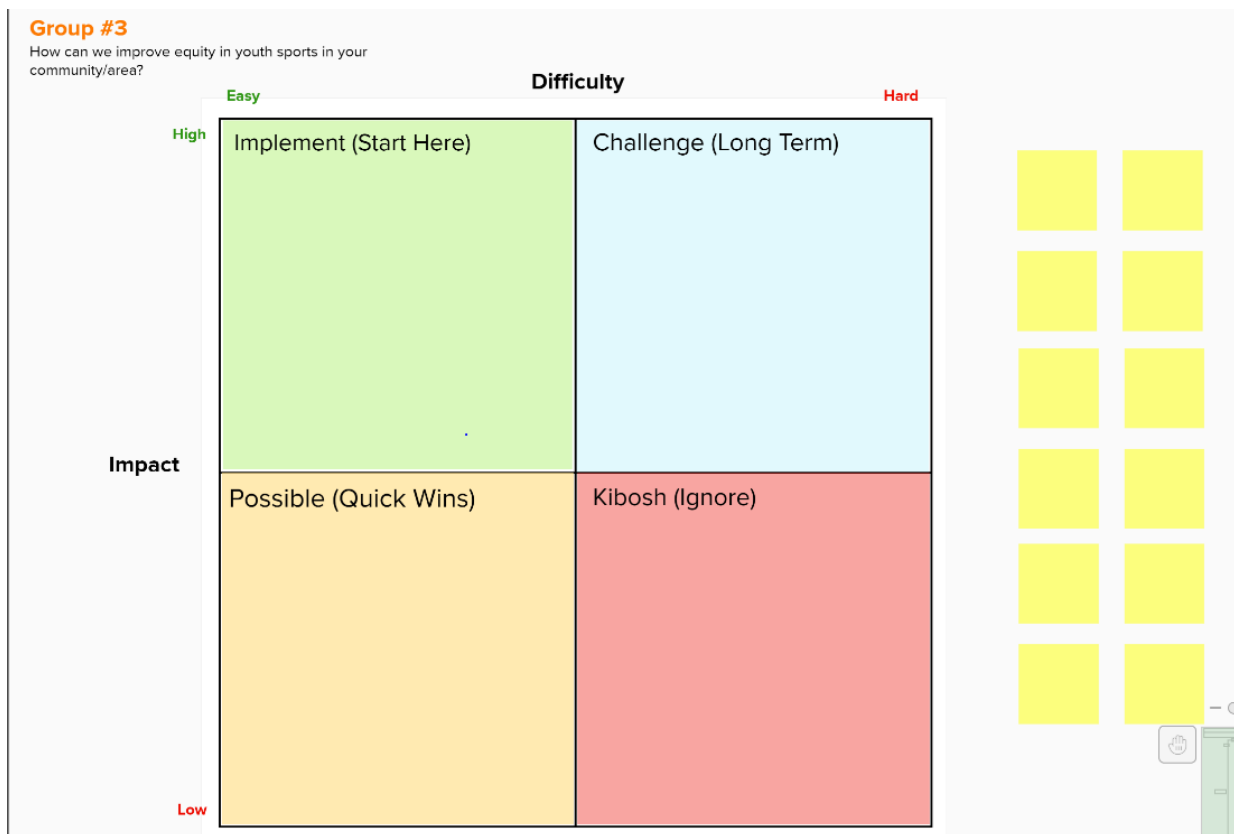





Figure 2. Example of the PICK chart used for Breakout #2

	Policies to Promote the Importance of Sports Question: How will we Promote the Importance of Sports in Kansas City?
Impact/Difficulty	Response
Implement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross sector collaboration around physical activity and its benefits. • Creating digital content to promote benefits of sports. • Using research and evidence-based data to tell a story. • Establish mass media strategy of KCPA, engaging experts in cross-sector work to create a consistent message. • Using technology to create opportunities and increase access.
Long Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to gather research and information to go after grants and sponsors. • Create Kansas City youth sports alliance, create comprehensive list to send messages to.
Quick Wins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share resources like regional report card to promote youth sports. • Creating micro-funding grants for mentors. • Use social media to keep community informed.

	Disparities in Access Question: How will we Reduce Disparities in Access to Youth Sports in Kansas City?
Impact/Difficulty	Response
Implement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bringing access/activities to the neighborhood. • Creating and promoting affordable programs. • Increasing partnerships across non-profits.
Long Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central coordinating organization.
Quick Wins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting schools and health related organizations (sports leagues).

	Developmentally Appropriate and Health-Focused Programming Question: How will we Increase Developmentally Appropriate and Health-Focused Youth Sports Programming in Kansas City?
Impact/Difficulty	Response
Implement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parenting education course using entertaining videos and scenarios, encouraging parents to think. • General tips and tricks for coaching and training volunteer coaches on how to run group programs. • Help parents understand easy volunteering opportunities.
Long Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking healthy habits with life lessons and skills in a digital format. • Coaching or training volunteer coaches on how to run group programs so that multiple developmentally appropriate activities are happening.
Quick Wins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing health focused things into youth sports, using other types of programs to catalyze health behaviors, brand health. • Including other stakeholders and groups to gather what information and education they need.

Conclusion and Takeaways

Despite the myriad of challenges that face youth sports programs, participants of the NYSS Kansas City virtual workshop left the session feeling positive about the future of youth sports programs within the Kansas City metro area.

Many programs and organizations throughout the area face similar challenges. This workshop provided a forum for attendees to hear from their colleagues, learn from other youth sports experts, and discover ways to promote and advance youth sports in their communities. Additionally, the workshop enabled participants to foster new relationships and build new partnerships that can collectively work to create safe, fun, inclusive, developmentally appropriate, and accessible sports opportunities for all youth.

More information on the National Youth Sports Strategy, including how to stay up to date and get more involved, can be found at <https://health.gov/our-work/physical-activity/national-youth-sports-strategy>.